



Herbert Sigüenza is "Cantinflas!"

Herbert Sigüenza de Culture Clash debuta como 'Cantinflas'

Profunda influencia
da nueva vida a
Mario Moreno
"Cantinflas"

Por Chuy Varela

escritor del Tecolote

Habiendo nacido en el barrio de la Misión en San Francisco, Herbert Sigüenza creció mirando películas de Cantinflas en el teatro New Mission.

En los años 60, cuando Sigüenza y su madre iban a ver a Cantinflas, Sigüenza nunca imaginó la gran impresión que Mario Moreno dejaría en su memoria. Ahora ya todo un actor, comediante de renombre y miembro fundador del grupo Culture Clash, Sigüenza reconoce esas influyentes raíces y nos lo hace saber por medio de la obra teatral "¡Cantinflas!" en el Centro para las Artes Yerba Buena (YBCA por sus siglas en inglés) en San Francisco del 19 al 29 de septiembre.

Actualmente, Sigüenza se desempeña como artista permanente del YBCA, y a sus 43 años de edad el YBCA y el Houston's Alley Theatre le encomendaron la tarea de escribir e interpretar dicha obra en su totalidad. Además de ser una de las personas que estuvieron al frente del

TEATRO

"Cantinflas"

with Herbert Sigüenza

Where: Yerba Buena Center,
701 Mission St.

When: Thurs.-Sat. 8 p.m.
Sept. 19-29

Tickets: \$15

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movimiento conocido como el movimiento teatral del Área de la Bahía de los años 70, Sigüenza es también un artista con talento que ha trabajado por muchos años para La Raza Graphics. Ha ganado numerosos honores con el Culture Clash, pero en comunicación directa desde su casa en el sur de California, nos hizo saber que él considera que hasta ahora Cantinflas es el papel más desafiante en su carrera.

La idea para esta obra surgió cuando Culture Clash estaba escribiendo "Carpa Clash" en 1993. En abril, César Chávez y Mario Moreno "Cantinflas" murieron con unos cuantos días de diferencia. Culture Clash dedicó "Carpa Clash" a estas legendarias figuras, pero fue la muerte del padre de Sigüenza (Alfredo Sigüenza) el 11 de septiembre del 2000, lo que lo hizo escribir e interpretar esta obra de teatro. Sigüenza organizó unos talleres de producción hace un año y medio en forma de lectura, con el fin de aceptar críticas del público en San Francisco, Los

Angeles y Houston.

Hoy Sigüenza cree que su obra "¡Cantinflas!" está lista. Estando Culture Clash en receso, Sigüenza siente que la interpretación de esta obra teatral será satisfactoria. El reparto incluye a Héctor Correa, considerado por Sigüenza como uno de los mejores actores del escenario en el Área de la Bahía, y Alejandro Cárdenas, de Los Ángeles, y dos actrices aún incógnitas.

CV: ¿Cómo ha ayudado Cantinflas en tu evolución como artista?

HS: Yo crecí mirando sus películas en el New Mission Theater con mi mamá y siempre mirábamos graciosos movimientos. Me frustraba cuando no entendía lo que decía, pero después me daba cuenta que no decía nada. Era un juego de palabras, una asombrosa manipulación de la lengua española; un verdadero estilo del DF, pero con más estilo. Cuando me dediqué de lleno a la comedia 20 años después, cuando formamos Culture Clash, Cantinflas era uno de nuestros ídolos. Fue un comediante que se inició en Las Carpas y luego comenzó a hacer películas. Fue la primera estrella mexicana que actuó en películas en inglés cuando hizo la película "La Vuelta al Mundo en 80 Días"

Vea CANTINFLAS, Página 12

Culture Clash's Herbert Sigüenza Debuts as Cantinflas

By Chuy Varela

el Tecolote staff writer

Deep influential
roots gives
legendary comedy
icon new life

Born and raised in the San Francisco Mission District, Herbert Sigüenza grew up watching Cantinflas films at the New Mission Theater. Little did he realize the impression Mario Moreno Reyes would make on him as he sat there with his mom in the 1960s.

Now as a renowned actor, comedian and founding member of Culture Clash, he acknowledges those influential roots embarking on a play called "Cantinflas!" at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San

Francisco from Sept. 19-29.

Currently a Wattis Artist-in-Residence at YBCA, the 43 year-old was commissioned by YBCA and Houston's Alley Theater to write and perform the full-length play. A leading figure in the Bay Area teatro movement of the late 1970s, Sigüenza is also a gifted artist who worked for many years at La Raza Graphics. He has garnered numerous laurels with Culture Clash, but talking from Southern California home, he considers "Cantinflas!" his most challenging role to date.

The idea for this profile came to him when Culture Clash was writing "Carpa Clash" in 1993. In April both César Chávez and Mario Moreno "Cantinflas" died a few days apart. They dedicated "Carpa Clash" to these legendary figures but it was the passing of his own father (Alfredo Sigüenza)



Herbert Sigüenza is "Cantinflas!"

on 9/11 two years ago that convinced him to write and perform the play. He began workshop productions a year and a half ago and has done it for feedback purposes in reading form in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Houston.

Now Sigüenza feels "Cantinflas!" is pretty much ready. With Culture Clash currently on hiatus, he finds doing this play refreshing, different and fulfilling. The cast includes Hector Correa, who Sigüenza considers one of the best stage actors in the Bay Area, and Alejandro Cardenas, from Los Angeles, with two to-be-announced female actresses.

CV: So where does Cantinflas fit in the evolution of Herbert Sigüenza?

HS: I grew up watching him. I

See CANTINFLAS, Page 10

LEGUIZAMO, desde la Página 8

Leguizamo dijo: "Fue el mejor negocio que se ha dado en la televisión, no sólo el mejor negocio para un latino".

Se dice que CBS firmó un contrato de más de diez millones de dólares.

John Leguizamo debutará detrás de las cámaras cuando dirija conjuntamente la serie "Infamous" para HBO. El guión de esta serie fue escrita por Frank Pugliese basada en una historia escrita por Leguizamo y Kathy DeMarco con respecto a un pugilista latino que será representado por Leguizamo. La filmación comenzó el 5 de agosto en Nueva York.

"Sexaholix: A Love Story" ha sido su proyecto exitoso más reciente.

Este show se presentó por primera vez en el Royale Theater en Nueva York el año pasado, este show de una sola persona fue todo un éxito. Celebrities como Robert DeNiro, Madonna, y Al Pacino estuvieron entre la audiencia.

Este show es en su mayor parte autobiográfico, y en él dice cosas como cuando una mujer latina recibe un anillo de matrimonio, sus caderas se inflan. Incorporando su talento de bailarín en esta presentación, Leguizamo imita los movimientos que diferencian el estilo de bailar de los colombianos, de los mexicanos, de los dominicanos, y de los portorriqueños.

Leguizamo se ha establecido como uno de los mejores comediantes de Estados Unidos. Se ganó esta reputación en su primera presentación hace una década en "Mambo Mouth".

Leguizamo tiene 38 años y ahora es su turno de brillar como actor. Y es la persona correcta para ayudar a que los latinos se establezcan seriamente en la televisión.

La cadena de cable HBO difundirá "John Leguizamo's Sexaholix: A Love Story". Lo que lo hace tan cómico es que dice en voz alta todas las cosas que pensamos, pero que no nos atrevemos a decir.

Una probadita más de su presentación: Una vez estuvo saliendo con una mujer de edad que se llamaba Penny a quien embarazó y ella quería abortar al bebé y él le dice, "¡Pero Penny este niño es mi hijo también! ¿No te importa?". Leguizamo dice que Penny respondió: "Tienes razón. No es justo matar a este feto y dejar que el padre siga vivo".

No lo pierda de vista. ¡Bien hecho, John!

Traducido por Mitchell Cowen Verter



John Leguizamo

LEGUIZAMO, from Page 8

ing.

Mostly autobiographical, in it he charges ahead with charges such as, when a Latino woman receives a wedding ring, her hips inflate. Incorporating his considerable dance talent into his show, he makes moves delineating the street-style differences of Colombians, Mexicans, Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. Much of his audience is from "the new New York," as he says, but gringos appreciate such antics and he has quite a reputation among them too.

Leguizamo has established himself as one of America's greatest mimics. His first show, Mambo Mouth, a decade ago, gave him that reputation.

Jumping around the stage, changing characters in his white jumper and blue jeans, his wiry body constantly contorts and expands into new original character images that has his audience gasping for more.

He is now 38 years of age. The time is now for Leguizamo. And he is the right person for the part to help Latinos establish themselves in serious television.

HBO picked up "John Leguizamo Sexaholix: A Love Story." What makes him so funny is that he says so uncontrollably out loud all the stuff that we think, but never have the nerve to say.

Another morsel from his show: He once went with an older woman named Penny who he got pregnant and who then wanted an abortion. He says in the act, "But Penny—this is my baby too! Shouldn't I have a say in it?" To which he says Penny replied, "You're right. It's not fair to kill the fetus and let the father live."

Watch for him. Good work, John!



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CANTINFLAS, from Page 9

used to go to the New Mission Theater to see movies with my mom and we'd see the Cantinflas flicks. I used to get frustrated because I didn't know what he was saying. Later I realized that he wasn't saying anything at all. He did verbal aesthetics. Amazing manipulation of the Spanish language. Real DF (Mexico City) but he took it to new heights. When I got into comedy 20 years later when we formed Culture Clash, Cantinflas was an icon for us. A comic who started in Las Carpas (Mexican vaudeville) and crossed over onto mainstream films. He was the first Mexican crossover star too when he did "Around The World in 80 Days" in 1965. Cantinflas was also the only Mexican star that had a deal with Columbia pictures for worldwide distribution and was known as a shrewd businessman, union organizer and philanthropist. He was the voice of the working class people, which gave him mass appeal in Mexico. He was like Charlie Chaplin's little tramp. I believe Cantinflas borrowed from Chaplin for his character "El Peladito." The idea of the everyday man struggling against society and where with dignity and pride he overcomes everything thrown at him.

CV: Doing this piece also shows how much you've matured as an actor?

HS: I don't think I could have done this 10 years ago. I would dress like him on Halloween/Day of the Dead and people said I looked like him. But I didn't have the chops, expertise or confidence to do him. You really have to be ready. Now I'm ready. It's an accumulation of everything I've learned about physical and verbal comedy. He was a genius and if I can do 10 percent of what he encompasses that then I'm satisfied. I think it will make people happy. I'm a veteran and this is one of the most challenging things I've done as a comic actor.

CV: You started acting in the SF Mission at a time when there was a teatro renaissance going on in the late 1970s. Tell us about your Teatro background?

HS: In 1978 I founded a group called Teatro Gusto with the late Rodrigo Reyes. We did Spanish-speaking theater at the Mission Cultural Center and Capp St. Center. That was my baptism into theater. I'm not a trained actor and got my start through community theater. In 1984 we formed Culture Clash and again it was just doing it "a la brava." Around 1985 we trained at El Teatro Campesino for a couple of years. We did their plays and they produced our plays too. That was a good training ground. Luis Valdez is a great teacher and taught us a combination of "Carpa" and Aztec ritual theater. He ingrained in us the spirituality of theater. I've also worked with Teatro Latino and Teatro Esperanza. I was in all those groups. It was something that grew out of the Aztlan movement.

CV: What were the hardest things to glean of Cantinflas' character?

HS: His physicality. He had a unique movement about him, the Cantinflas jiggle, the way he moved his hips. Then there was the language. That was the hardest part for me. Picking up the right cadence, that Mexican DF cadence with rapid-fire speech delivery. It was brilliant the way he said a lot without saying anything. It didn't make sense but it had its logic. Lots of double entendre. In this play I also age from 23 to 80 years old. The changes in his physicality change as his voice lowers and body decays.

CV: Is this play merely a nostalgic biography or does it say something about today?

HS: I decided to do this play after my dad (Alfredo Siguenza) died on 9/11 but two years ago. Cantinflas was his favorite comedian. After he died I said: "OK, I'm going to really do this as a tribute to my dad." It's nostalgic but if you really analyze Cantinflas' films a lot of them were really political especially his 1960s ones like "El Profe" and "Si Yo Fuera Diputado." Not overtly political but definitely criticizing the government and society in general. Never to the degree that Culture Clash does.

CV: Does the play dig up any Cantinflas chisme?

HS: I concentrate on his work and scenes from the films and not necessarily his life. I read a bunch of books on his life and the chisme (gossip) was not there. But talk to Mexicans and they'll say, "yeah he was with Maria Felix and Silvia Pinal . . . he was a real playboy." I've also heard he was real jealous of Tin Tan and paranoid about his fame. But I only deal with his personal life a little bit to show the complexity of his artistry.